

*Faculty of Music
University of Toronto*

thursday
evening
series

OTTO ARMIN, Violin

A CONCERT OF UNACCOMPANIED VIOLIN

*March 23, 1972
Concert Hall, Edward Johnson Building
8:30 p.m.*

Sonatine #6, op. 49 no. 2

J. Martinon
(1910-

Lento — Allegro - Più Vivo — Moderato — Allegro - Più Vivo

As a violin pupil at the conservatories of Lyons and Paris, Martinon studied composition with Roussel and conducting with Charles Munch. Famous as a conductor, he has held posts with the Concerts Lamoureux, London Philharmonic, Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris and Chicago Symphony. His compositions include an opera, a ballet, chamber music, choral music, and piano works. While in a prison camp in 1941, he composed "Stalag 9 ou Musique d'exil", which incorporates jazz rhythms and instruments. His "Hymne à la vie" (1944) is scored for orchestra, saxophones and Ondes Martenot. For the anniversary of the Chicago Symphony in 1965, he wrote his fourth symphony "Altitudes", a work which he explains does not attempt to picture mountains or clouds, but to give the impression of the pinnacles which man can reach through his endeavours.

Sonata II for solo violin in A minor

J. S. Bach
(1685-1750)

Grave — Fuga — Andante — Allegro

In 1720, Bach wrote three sonatas and three partitas for violin solo. In the first movement of this sonata, he used keyboard techniques in the alternation between chords and rapid running passages. (The whole sonata was later transcribed by him for clavier). The Fuga was well-known in Bach's time because the famous theorist, Johann Mattheson, praised its skilful construction in his treatise of 1737. This sonata follows the form of a "sonata da chiesa" with four movements (slow, fast, slow, fast), a fugue in second place, and a new key for the third movement (in this case, C major). The last movement consists of a rapid, continuous succession of melodic motives in sequential patterns and dynamic contrasts. The Germans were highly skilled at that time in the polyphonic style of violin-playing, and Bach's notation of multiple stops calls for extreme sustaining powers in the polyphonic texture. His notation is perhaps intended more for indicating the contrapuntal construction of the piece than for the execution of the notes. In 1904, Albert Schering developed a Bach bow theory, from which was constructed a high-arched, convex bow with a mechanical thumb lever that could tighten or loosen the hair of the bow while the performer played. The loose hair would facilitate the sustaining of full chords, but the tight hair was necessary to play individual strings. In the face of adverse historical evidence, Schering repudiated his theory in 1920, but Albert Schweitzer and others have persisted in their belief in the "Bach" bow.

INTERMISSION

Elegie (1944)

Stravinsky
(1882-1971)

In 1944, Stravinsky composed this work for solo viola in memory of Alphonse Onnou, founder of the Pro Arte Quartet of Brussels, to be played by Germain Prévost, violist of that quartet. In 1945, Balanchine arranged *Elegie* for a short ballet, but used two violas. While Stravinsky admired the ballet, he preferred the use of a single instrument. He later adapted *Elegie* for solo violin. The opening theme resembles a dirge chant as it continually winds around the same few notes. His steady contrapuntal accompaniment maintains two-part counterpoint, but often uses wide intervals to create the effect of more voices. In the score, he indicates strategic breaks in this undulating melody by breath marks which suggest a curious sighing effect. The middle section begins with a long, rolling melody that is treated contrapuntally four times. A recapitulation of the first theme completes the piece. Throughout the work, Stravinsky avoids the jerky effect of rapid arpeggios in keeping with the elegiac character of the piece.

Sonata, op. 27 no. 3, "Ballade"

E. Ysaÿe
(1858-1931)

As a violin virtuoso, Belgian-born Ysaÿe toured extensively throughout Europe and America before he began a career of teaching and composing. In Paris, his friends included Franck, Lekeu and Debussy, each of whom dedicated a work to him. His compositions usually involve a solo violin with various combinations of orchestral instruments or unaccompanied sonatas, but he did complete an opera in the Walloon language shortly before his death. This one movement sonata for solo violin contains three tempo sections: *Lento molto sostenuto*, *Molto moderato quasi lento*, *Allegro in Tempo giusto e con bravura*. The subtitle "*Ballade*" applies most clearly to the opening section, in which the declamatory powers of the violin are employed "*In modo di recitativo*". By means of chromatically altered chords and parallel chord progressions in the middle section, Ysaÿe assured the violin's usefulness in the "modern" music of his time. In the last and longest section, he attempts to create at least two planes in the texture, providing a melodic line and accompanimental figures to coincide with it; this causes frequent arpeggios, multiple stops and rapid, independent finger work. There is no symmetrical construction in the thematic or harmonic content of this sonata; its musical events gradually evolve in tempo and technical virtuosity.

Sonata for solo violin

Tempo di ciaccona — Fuga — Melodia — Presto

Bartok
(1881-1945)

On a commission from Yehudi Menuhin, Bartok completed the sonata for solo violin in 1944. The first movement is a ciaccona in character and tempo only. Its form resembles the sonata-allegro with two contrasting themes which are developed and fragmented by virtuosic techniques and then are restated with slight alterations. Chromatic freedom prevents the establishment of one key, but the movement centers around G, beginning in the minor and ending in the major. The bold, energetic character of the ciaccona is achieved by agitated rhythms, leaps between the extreme pitch ranges, and sudden dynamic contrasts. The Fuga is freely constructed to allow frequent modifications of the fugal subject and elaborate episodes of non-fugal material. The fugal subject, which opens the movement, employs small, often chromatic, intervals, and articulating rests which allow easier combination of the subject with countersubject material. Illustrating the expressive capabilities of the violin, the Melodia uses long phrases which usually end with a soft echo, often in harmonics. A contrasting section contains mostly double or triple stops ornamented with trills. Bartok's variation skills make the return of the opening melodic material seem fresh and new. The Presto opens with the buzzing repetition of single notes or small intervals, and then a folk-like tune in the Phrygian mode increases the rhythmic vitality with frequent off-beat rhythms. A third section, marked Tranquillo, introduces a melody reminiscent of the third movement. Elements of all three sections are interwoven to form a coda. (S.L.H.)

Next Event:

Sunday, March 26th, 1972 3 p.m.
University of Toronto Concert Band
Conductor: Robert A. Rosevear